

PoliCom Chronicles



Winter CMST 301-01
Political Communication
Scholars Report 2018



EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

start something **big**

Volume 9, Issue 1

March 2018

Becoming Political Communicators: Students Establish Practical and Scholarly Credentials through Blog Challenges, Guest Speakers, Campaign Research, PowerPoint Presentations, and Two Too Many Quizzes & Exams

In CLASSROOM, January 30th, 2018

The unanimous Declaration of Political Communication 301

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to appreciate the bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of good peoples notwithstanding, we the undersigned do hereby offer our thanks and appreciation to

Christopher Schroll

for his time and the sharing of his expertise, his effort to be with us in person, and his courage and convictions on behalf of the people of Spokane for whom his candidacy is devoted. We wish him strength in his endeavor and an abundance of expertise in the field of political communication suited to the magnitude of his inspired vision for our city. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.

Chris Schroll *Michael* *Andrew* *Ben*
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Meet the Candidate

Early in the winter quarter, before the snow started falling in earnest, students visited with recent Eastern graduate and candidate for Spokane mayor, Chris Schroll. Schroll focused on the journey to become a candidate (of particular interest to this class) and the role in which political communication strategies serve the early stages of his campaign. Without ever mentioning partisan allegiance or his opponents, Schroll held student attention for over 30 minutes, including questions initiated by the students. After Schroll left, students signed a "Declaration of Appreciation" for Schroll's time and energy (see far left) modeled on a document Thomas Jefferson once authored.



[L-R] Justin photobombs from Group 2 as Group 4 members get their official portrait taken. Kara flashes a great smile, Claire hides behind the peace movement, Mollie gives a thumbs up, and Kendall displays her textbook just in case her instructor has forgotten which class this is.



This amazing—and randomly assigned—group of scholars comprised four women whose first names begin with an “A” and a fifth whose name begins with a “K.” They called themselves “KAAAA,” and would often lead the class in a round of “caw” sounds, like that of a bird of prey. [L-R] Avery thinks it’s funny, Amelia is also amused, Ali lights up the room, Kyra smiles because she knows I’m still struggling to pronounce her name correctly, and Ashley is spliced in there because one picture could not contain all of Group 1’s brilliance.

3 VERY IMPORTANT Things for All PoliCom Students to Remember, in chronological order:

1. See Symposium details at <https://access.ewu.edu/university-college/undergraduate-research/symposium>

2. See Spokane County Voter Registration details at <https://www.spokanecounty.org/207/Register-to-Vote>

3. Really early in Fall of 2018, ask CMST or PR or Journalism faculty about participating in the AP Election Returns Project. More details here: <https://www.ewu.edu/about/ewu-news/2016-ap-center>

Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency

BLOG 5 CHALLENGE: Propose a theory by thinking broadly about the 3 presidencies that spanned the last ten years: George W. Bush (#43), Barack Obama (#44), and Donald Trump (#45). What do all three have in common that seems to set them apart from their long line of 42 predecessors? Because President Trump has only been in office for little more than a year, your job is to show how the pattern established by the previous two presidents already has echoes into the current administration.

Geneva: The Politically Polarizing Presidency. Over the past 10 years the United States has taken on a politically-divided climate. As each President is elected the polarization of the opposing party is more defined. The idea of this political polarization is when a President makes his individual stance on any given issue, policy, or person and is more likely to be strictly defined by their identification with a particular political party or ideology. The political polarization is leading to a “hyper-partisanship” in which a President continues to distance himself from the people of his opposing party. The last 3 Presidents have all distanced themselves from either their liberal or conservative counterparts. This behavior continues to divide people, and bring harsher criticism of the Presidents for being “too liberal” or “too conservative.”

Blas: The Constant Battle Between Countries and Nations. Because of the constant battle between countries and nations the U.S. Presidency has become a **Weapon Warfare Presidency.** Having a Weapon Warfare Presidency means concern for the use of weapons of terror that can bring serious danger to the U.S. and have capabilities of mass destruction. In the cases of our last three executives, they have all been faced with other countries or regimes suspected or detected developing such weapons. This has forced the U.S. to intervene.

Mady: The Invasive Presidency. The three most recent Presidents have made policy limiting American’s right to privacy or have upheld the policies that are in place that invade privacy. After the 9/11 attacks on the United States, there has been a tremendous focus on preventing future attacks. Each of these Presidents has reduced privacy for citizens of the United States and even our allies.

Chase: The Innovative Presidency. Due to the altering and shifting society that we have lived in, and continue to live in today, the past three presidents have had to innovate regarding foreign and domestic affairs. In my eyes an innovative president has to essentially take what they have on their plate when they take office, and make tweaks and changes to advance us as a nation.

Kara: The Turbulent Presidency. While it would be easy to say that every presidency is turbulent in one way or another, the past three presidents have had to deal with abnormal and unexpected hurricanes. While natural disasters are initially thought of as anything but political, the way a president and his administration respond to these natural disasters plays a large role in the public’s opinion of him. Since detrimental storms like these are unpredictable and uncommon, it undoubtedly goes beyond the Rhetorical Presidency in that each president has had to use the existing construct of the Rhetorical Presidency (especially the climate of expectations) in order for each to consistently execute the turbulent presidency.

Mollie: The Polluted Presidency. Pollution has been a very big problem especially the past 10-15 years with scared of global warming. While maybe not every president had agreed to the fullest of this issue the problem has been dealt with within each presidency. Pollution and environmental issues are still a problem and we have yet to have someone come up with a solid, realistic, and reliable plan to help out the earth.

Avery: The Gun Regulated Presidency. The Second Amendment right to own a gun has been under fire for many years, and the past three presidents have all dealt with mass shootings, they have all talked about new gun laws, and they all have done nothing. This has always been a touchy subject, but this issue comes up time and time again and has become a pattern of inaction among Presidents for the past 20 plus years. Each President chooses to not do anything in fear of losing the trust of the people by regulating their right to own a gun.

Ashley: Immigration Presidency. Before George W. Bush became president, immigrants had entered the country more than ever. Since then it has become a highly talked about topic. Each president is asked their reform plans when they are a candidate and again as they take office. Each president has a different view and approach to immigration and it determines how they are favored among the Latino community.

Shannon: The Social Presidency. Over the last three presidencies, social media has had so much impact that many of us use it as the only way we get information about what’s going on in the world. The idea behind “The Social Presidency” is that media created more and broader connections between the President and the people.



Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency

Amelia: The Unemployment Presidency. With every new President that enters there is always the discussion of whether they are going to help the unemployment rate or bring it down. One of the main worries for Americans is financial issues; a steady income helps us live a comfortable life. Employment brings in income to families. To study the “Unemployment Presidency” is to compare actual data and speeches where these three presidents mentioned unemployment and what to do about it.

Justin: The Controversial Presidency. It is nearly impossible for the most popular and responsible person in the U.S. to avoid controversy. Whether it be things they’ve done or said that ticked off the other party’s supporters—or was simply a questionable moral choice—all presidents have made these mistakes. However, there are quite a few we can name off the top of our heads from the last few presidents.

Derek: Freedom of Speech Presidency. From the year 2000 to the year 2018, all three of the different presidencies have expressed their freedom of speech using different tools. For example, George W. Bush used television; he did not have the same array of social media outlets as the Obama and Trump administrations have used to get their points across. These two most recent presidents were more familiar with the technology and got a lot more attention by using online media to contact the citizens of the country.

Kendall: The Social Media Presidency. The 21st century technology boom has impacted every aspect of how our society works. From relationships to news, technology is a part of it all. With the growth of technology, there was also a growth of social media websites that boomed as well. Through emails, ad campaigns, and being able to befriend our presidents directly by following their social media profiles, the relationship the public has had with Bush, Obama, and, Trump has been unlike any president before them.

Kyra: The Partisan Presidency. While the US has always had a two party system complete with frequent policy disagreements, there always seemed to be room for a middle ground that has kept the conversation between the two parties going. Since the end of the Bush administration, there has been a clear divide in the two parties. The divide between parties started to increase after Bush took office. While there was a push for bipartisanship at first, after 9/11 there was an increase in republican support for efforts toward the Iraq war and a massive amount of opposition from the democratic party. Thus, Bush’s bipartisan success came to an end and would never recover in his administration or the two that followed it.



Group Three always preferred a more “hands on” approach. L-R: Blas , Mady , Shannon , and Chase demonstrate the adage we often hear as having originated with trial lawyers: “When the facts are on your side, pound the facts. When the law is on your side, pound the law. When neither is on your side, pound the table.”

Women in Politics: Status Update

Blas: [I studied] a graph identifying the percentage of women in State Legislature from 1971-2015. From 1971 to 1991, there has been a great increase from 4.8% to 21%, then remaining almost stagnant for the next 14 years at below 25%. The major growth indicates an era when women started to become more liberated and demanding equal rights. Although women have taken advantages of higher education and political roles, it appears they have not achieved equal rights in politics and still seem to exist in a separate sphere of gender differences hampered by a binary discourse system.

Kyra: On the benefits of having women in office, including creating a more representative government, women also largely influence the types of legislation being passed and introduced. [Research] also attributes women in top national leadership positions with a 6.8% increase in GDP growth and “women leaders having more confidence from voters at managing difficult situations that require more inclusionary or cooperative approaches.” These points really showcase the [fact] that women positively influence the political sphere.

Geneva: [Anne Stein’s story] related back to my thoughts about the confidence in women and self-encouragement. Anne Stein got involved in the Democratic party early in her career and was very involved, yet she didn’t even think about running or serving in an elective campaign until further into her career. And although she began thinking about running, she never actually ran until she was asked to. Anne is a good example of the hesitancy from women when making the initial step to get involved.

Chase: Structural impediments are definitely an issue when women are trying to take office. Incumbents have greater than a 90 percent re-election rate. This obviously makes it difficult for anyone to gain a seat in Congress, and women are [already] in an uphill battle. On a state and national level, the voice and political attributes that women have need to be observed in a brighter light. Women in the political sphere have phenomenal ideas and action plans to offer. As a nation, we must push for a shift in the culture that currently prevents more women from running for office.

Derek: One *TIME* magazine cover says it all: “US Women Leadership Ranking is Pathetic Compared to Other Countries.” This is a good example of the media using its power and freedom to address this inequity, an inequity that should matter to everyone who values equal opportunity regardless of the gender, race, and religion of our political candidates. Articles like this can catch people’s attention, get them talking about it, and working to solve it.

Kara: Most women don’t even consider themselves as potential political candidates. Harold Lasswell’s theory of a “political type” suggests political people have tendencies to seek power. Yet, women are told from a young age that they should be passive and take on a care-giving role, which is basically the opposite of seeking out power. While both men and women have to weigh the costs before entering a race, traditional gender socialization in our society causes men to believe they can ‘do a better job’ and become a candidate whether they have the proper qualifications or not. Women, on the other hand, decide that if they want to become a candidate, it is necessary to work their way through the career sequence and become qualified first.

Claire: If you have ever thought about becoming a political candidate, then you’ve considered being a candidate. It’s as easy as that. Step two is deciding to enter an actual race, which involves a lot more. You are more likely to enter in a political race if you are involved in your community, or an activist. Women are elected at the same rate as men, but they are less likely to run. That may be changing as many millennial women are going to college and being seen in the workplace more and more. We know that when levels of education increase, so does the likelihood of seeking a political role. Knowledge is power; when you expand your mind and become smarter, you are more able to see yourself leading change in the world. You have so much to offer when it becomes about something larger than yourself.

Mollie: The pattern that I am noticing is that, when it comes to female representation in state legislative office, there are more Democratic women. It makes me wonder if this is occurring because Republicans are known for being resistant to change. Washington state was previously ranked #1 in the nation for women’s representation in state government. Since 2016, our state dropped to 4th place, with Colorado rising to #1. I also noticed that 8 out of the top 10 states are blue states, again suggesting a pattern aligned to the political parties when it comes to female representation in state legislatures.

Kendall: 1676 women and 1885 men participated in a nationwide survey of eligibility pool. Interestingly the only part on the graph where the men and women were equal was in levels of volunteerism. We often see women getting the short end of the stick on the political spectrum. These statistics give us a little bit of perspective for why women have to fight, rally and march so hard for our rights- because there are not very many women in office to help fight for us.

Women in Politics: Status Update

Shannon: [I learned that] women are less likely to run for an electoral office than men, even though women are just as qualified as men and similar with regard to political participation, proximity, and interest. There's a dramatic gender gap in politics, and it's not because women aren't capable or interested in politics. It's because most women don't think they belong in electoral office due to gender stereotypes. It is important to acknowledge this gender gap so that women who are interested in politics know that we need them to join into the political conversation. We need this not only for representation, but because women offer multiple perspectives from different views and backgrounds—all of which needs to be heard.

Alseyni: [Research] shows men are more invested in considering running for office, discussing it with their close ones, taking the initiative to investigate how to put their names on a ballot, exploring a run with party leaders, and securing needed financial support. I think this is due to the fact that men interact more with elected officials to start with. Therefore, they would be in a better position to pursue a career in the field. I also think that women would have to overcome more obstacles to be elected to office, keeping them women from even considering running for in the first place. They would probably just assume their chances are very slim to none with all those men fighting for the same spot.

Justin: [My research] started by tackling the importance of gender dynamics in electoral politics and how they affect candidate development from the eligibility pool to elective office. The theme here is that men and women have a completely different experience on their elective trail. This difference arises because women have a different relationship with politics due to societal labeling of what men and women should be. Although people say they disregard these stereotypes, whether they be citizens or elected officials, it is obvious that these labels aren't actually gone when we see the scant reflection of women in leadership roles.

Mady: [I studied] why fewer women are running for office than men. Recent research claims that women lack appropriate amounts of the right type of ambition, (namely expressive ambition, static ambition, progressive ambition, and discrete ambition). This lack of ambition reduces their drive to run initially, run again, or run again for a higher office. I do think that women tend to lack ambition for pursuing positions of public power or notoriety, but this lack is a consequence of societal expectations put on women and causing them to resist the spotlight in the political realm as well as in positions of power in corporations.

Ashley: It is essential to study women's representation in political office and identify efforts to increase it. Scholars The theory of Situational Factors—The Pipeline Explanation—explains that there is already a large portion of women in four critical pipeline careers leading to political candidacy: Law, Business, Education and Political activism. Yet, women in these careers don't run because they aren't encouraged to do so as often as men are. Morris Fiorina's *The New American Democracy* claims that the underrepresentation of women "will naturally lessen as women's career patterns become more like those of men." At the current rate, however, women will have equal representation in elected office in about 500 years! Because women's electoral chances and their strength in the eligibility pool are nearly at par with men, it is important to encourage women to follow through and run for office.

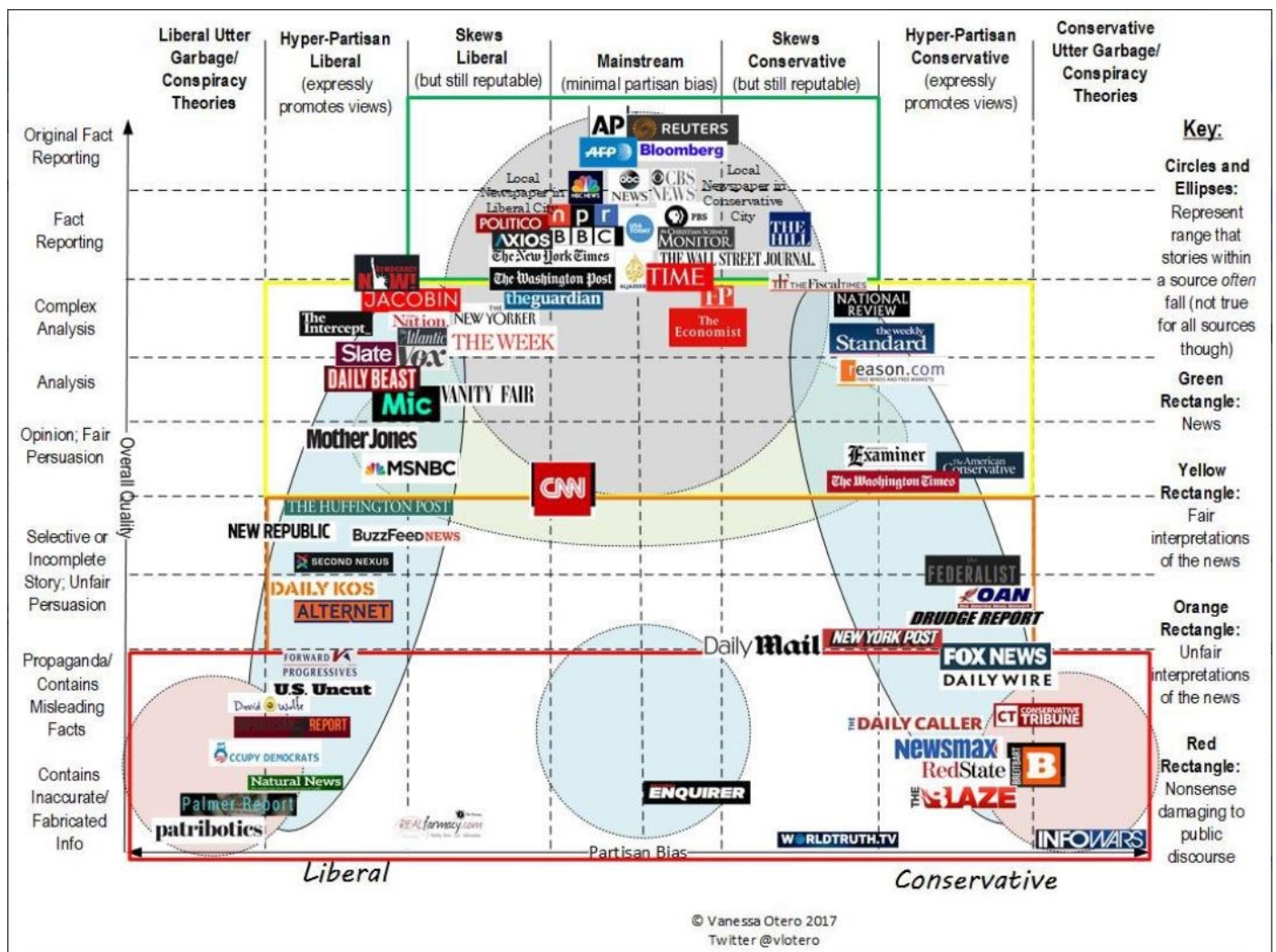
Ali: In the U.S, women make up about half of the population but don't even make up one-fourth of its Congress. America in 2015 was ranked better than most countries in job/economic opportunities for women, but we lag behind those same countries when it comes to female representation in positions of political leadership. Chapter 8 of our textbook states that American female candidates "are expected to maintain a cloak of femininity while simultaneously projecting a professional image." Social expectations, conscious and unconscious, push people to certain professions. However, as more women become interested in politics, that "cloak of femininity" could finally disappear.

Amelia: The topic of female representation in American political leadership is very important to me, primarily because I am a woman. But it is also important to remember that it is a human right to be fairly represented by our elected leaders. Research says that there are six ways that female representation in office benefits American society, including the equalization of educational opportunities, the enactment of legislative reforms and increased focus on issues concerning women and children, and the ability to further the presence and agency of grassroots women's empowerment movements. This last one is most important: equal rights for all starts with empowering women to run for office.

Avery: As an explanation for the gender gap in our political system, [I learned] that potential female candidates focus mostly on community issues while men are guided by personal ambition. Women tend to think of political representation as part-to-whole; we like to see the bigger picture and make sure everyone will have a say in who benefits. Some women might get insecure when considering a run for office, but we need to remember that women have as much right as men do to have our say and represent our communities.



Group 2 hunts for potential artifacts to use as the focus for their C2C (concepts to campaigns) research presentations. [L-R] Derek ponders, Alseyni tilts, Justin drafts his proposal, and Geneva finally locates the best song ever used in a campaign ad.



The above graph is a 2017 update from Colorado attorney Vanessa Otero's 2016 effort to identify left-right intensity biases and the relative strength of reporting in media sources. PoliComm Scholars studied 8 of what their textbook author called "real media biases" including the particular way stories are told, alignment with the status quo, profit motives, contemporary and immediate stories, and stories that serve to affirm American assumptions about ourselves.